

No Soldiers Left Behind: *Key Initiatives to Counteract Veterans' Stigma*

**Defense Centers of Excellence for
Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain
Injury (DCoE) Webinar**
Washington, D.C., October 20, 2010

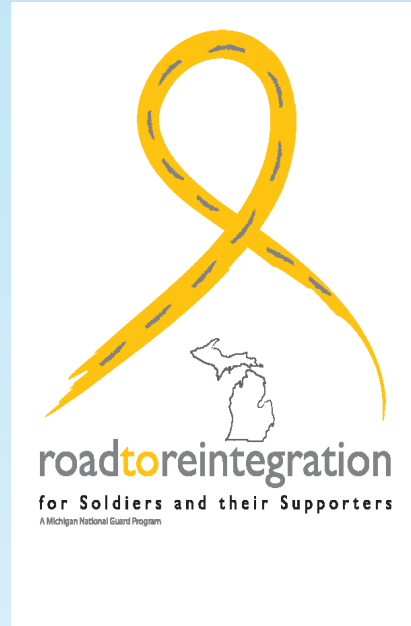
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Acknowledgements



- Greden, J.F., Valenstein, M., Spinner, J., Blow, A., Gorman, L.A., Dalack, G.W., Marcus, S., Kees, M. Buddy-to-Buddy, a citizen soldier peer support program to counteract stigma, PTSD, depression, and suicide. Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci., *in press*, 2010.

Five Needed Initiatives

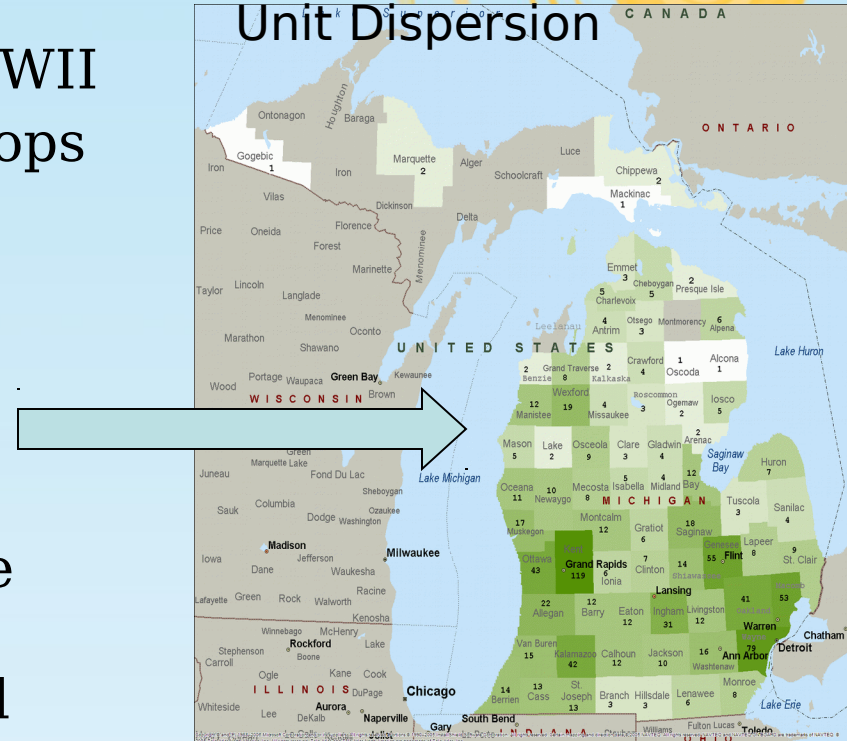
1. Citizen-Soldiers
 1. National Guard and Reserves
2. Co-occurrence (co-morbidity)
3. “Changing culture by using culture”
 1. Buddy-to-Buddy
 2. Family
 3. Resiliency
4. Trusted “voices” to counteract stigma
5. National Dissemination



Rediscovering Citizen-Soldiers

- America's National Guard
 - Largest deployment since WWII
 - ~35 - 40% of > 2 million troops in Iraq and Afghanistan
- Michigan Army National Guard (MI ARNG) = illustration
 - > 9,000 Soldiers
 - 90% deployed, most multiple times
 - Returning soldiers dispersed
 - 3500 need behavioral health care
- Traumas and consequences similar among active duty and "citizen soldiers"

125 Infantry & 126 Cavalry Unit Dispersion



Courtesy of Thomas Fluent, M.D.

- **Various “diagnoses” almost always co-exist**
 - Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
 - Clinical Depression
 - Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
 - Sleep disturbances
 - Substance Abuse
 - Suicidal thoughts
- **“Co-occurrence is the norm, so treatment of ALL prevailing clinical syndromes also should be the norm”** (Greden et al, Ann. N.Y. Acad Sci. 2010, in press)
 - Treat individuals, **NOT** diagnostic labels

Reluctance to enter treatment is **THE** barrier

- Estimated **40%** need behavioral health care
 - 8% report suicidal thoughts
- **50%** reluctant to seek **ANY** help
- Only **30%** received adequate care
- **40...50...30** -- the **REAL** problem

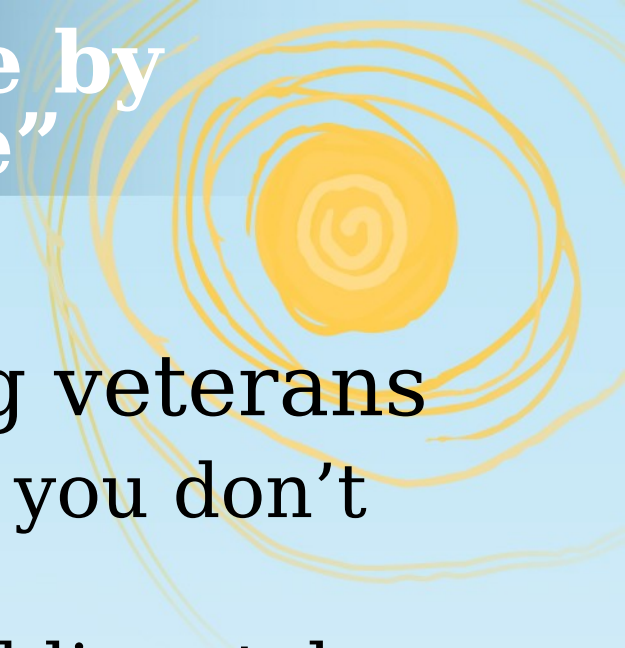


Why don't 50% seek help? STIGMA is a key variable

- Do not want it in military records (27%)
- Unit leadership might treat me differently (20%)
- Too embarrassing (17%)
- Harm career (17%)
- Costs (15%)
- Do not know where to go to get help (6%)
- No providers in my community (6%)
- Transportation (5%)

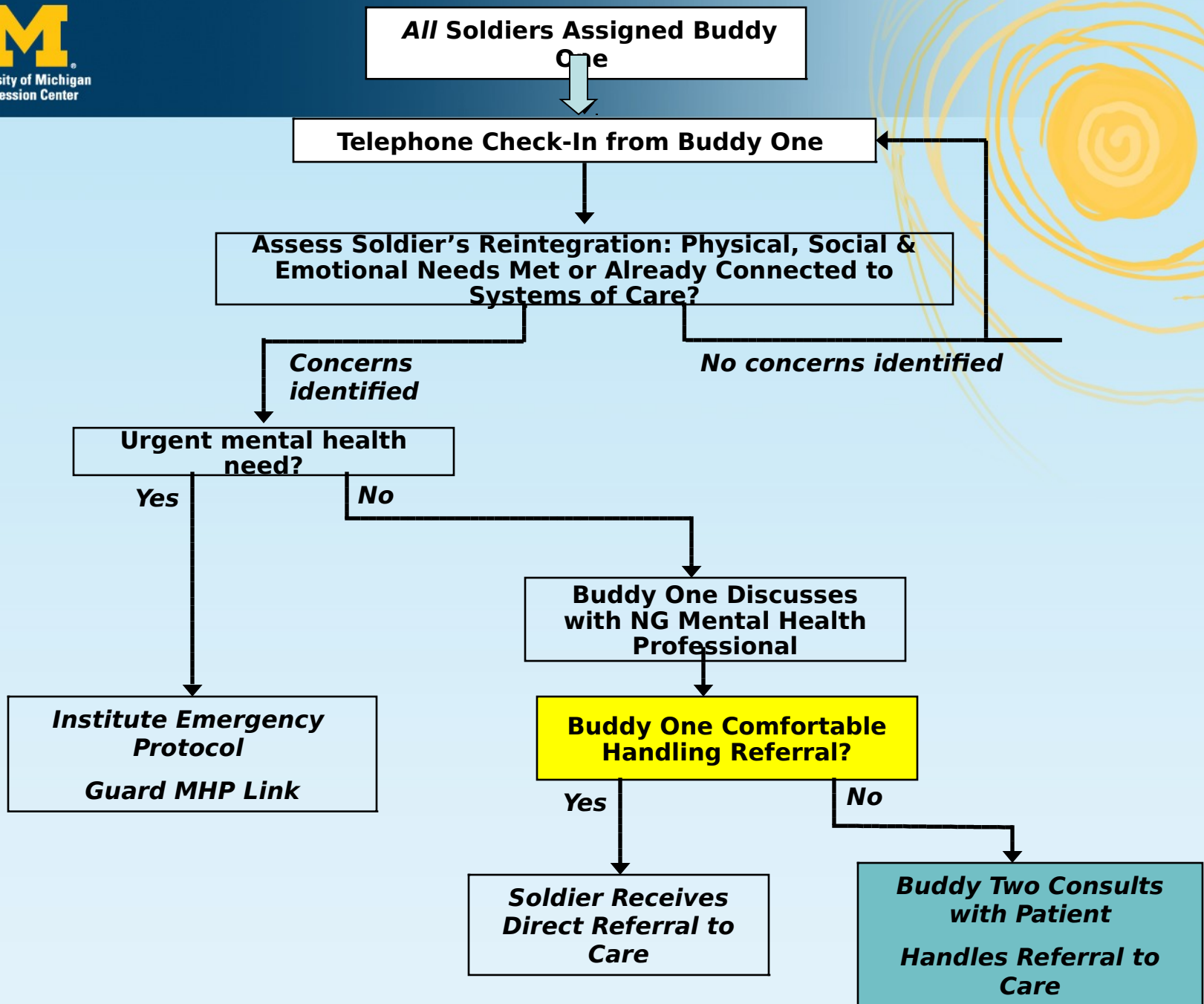
“Changing culture by using culture”

- Comments from returning veterans
 - “If you haven’t been there, you don’t get it.”
 - “No soldier left behind...soldiers take care of their own”
 - “Another veteran who has been there makes it easier to get help”



**“Changing culture by
using culture:**

“Buddy-to-Buddy”



Buddy One Training

- 3 hours, with Manual
- Support of Military Leadership essential
- Goals
 - Recognize signs suggesting need for evaluation
 - Know Resources
 - “What do you do in cases of emergencies?”
 - **“Your job is not to give help, it’s to get help”**



BUDDY★TO★BUDDY

A PROGRAM OF PEER SUPPORT AND OUTREACH
FOR VETERANS OF THE MICHIGAN ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

B1 MANUAL

Buddy-to-Buddy Meeting Goals

- ❖ **~500 Buddy Ones, ~ 30 Buddy Twos trained so far**
- ❖ **554 Soldiers Surveyed**
 - ❖ 90% understand intent
 - ❖ 65% receive regular calls from their Buddy
 - ❖ 65% feel comfortable talking to their Buddy
 - ❖ 53% used resources or services suggested by Buddy
- ❖ **21% referred by buddy**
- ❖ **Recommendation: A National Program of Buddy-to-Buddy needed for all returning veterans, including returning “citizen soldiers”**

Buddy-to-Buddy

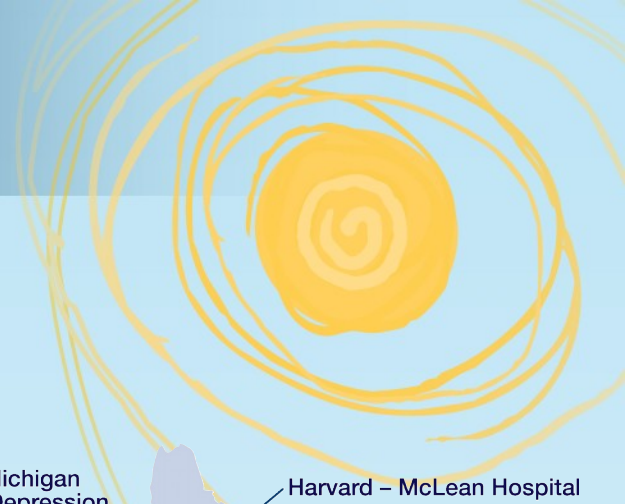
- Same principles are used to involve families!
 - Using culture to change culture
 - Many family members also benefit from treatment
 - A “team”



National Dissemination via partnerships

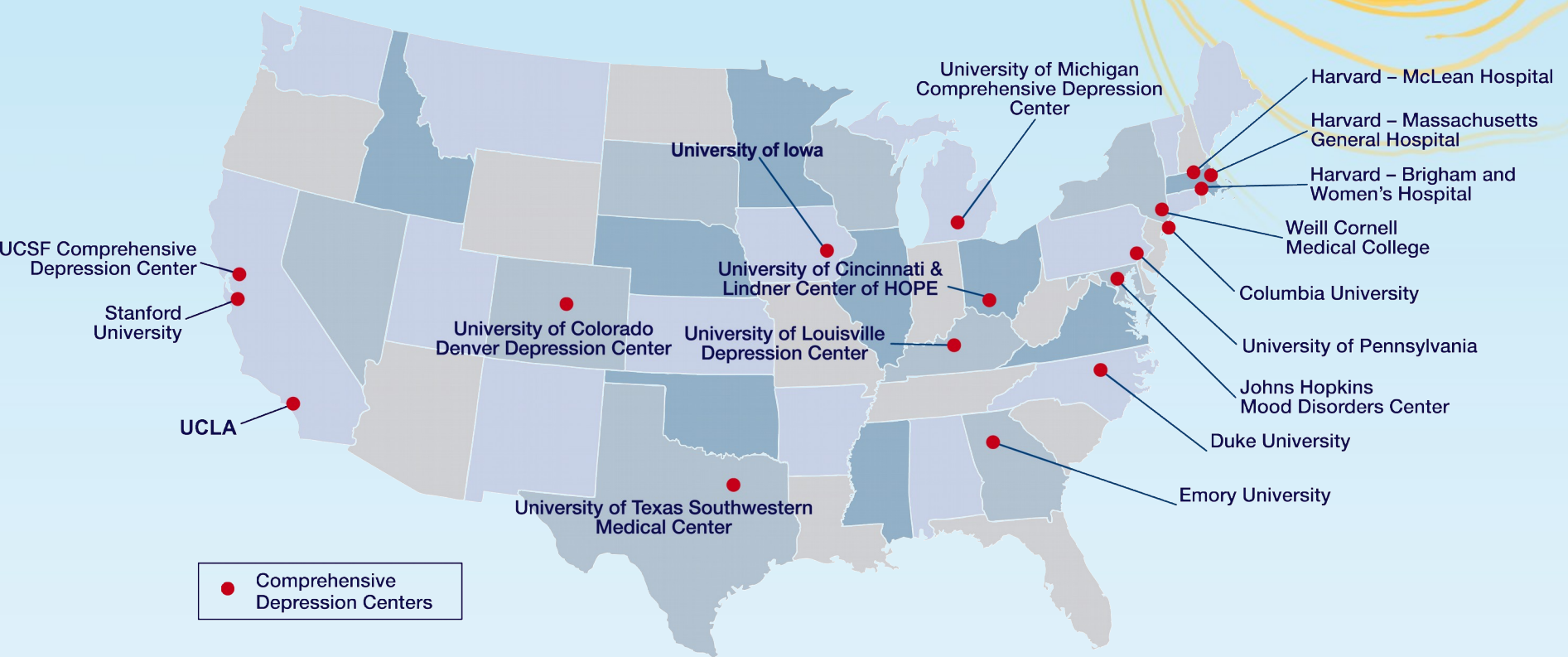
- ❖ TRICARE
- ❖ Veterans Administration Hospitals
- ❖ Military facilities
- ❖ Community resources
- ❖ Student Veterans of America
(www.SVA.org)
- ❖ National Network of Depression
Centers (www.NNDC.org)
- ❖ Telecare/Telemedicine/Telehealth





National Network of Depression Centers

Vision & Roadmap



**Trusted “voices” also help
to counteract stigma”**



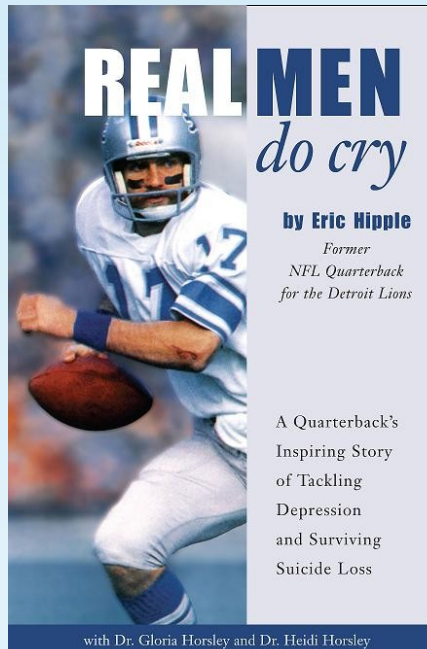
Gary Sinese; Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders



Courtesy of Capt. Thomas Fluent,
M.D., U.S. Navy

“Under the Helmet” and “Veterans Supporting Veterans”

- Athletes and Veterans
 - Shawn Andrews, a two-time Eagles Pro Bowl offensive lineman
 - Eric Hipple, former NFL Quarterback
 - University of Michigan Depression Center
 - AFSP Lifesaver Award
 - Many others



Five Needed Initiatives

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 - National Guard and Reserves
- Co-occurrence
- “Changing culture by using culture”
 - Buddy-to-Buddy
 - Family
 - Resiliency
- Trusted “voices” to counteract stigma
- National Dissemination



“Partner or Perish”



We **WILL** win this fight

Thank you

Go Blue!

